

DOE project strengthens treatment of groundwater

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Staff report



U.S. Department of Energy photo

Operators drill wells during the first phase of the project to further optimize groundwater treatment at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant.

Nine new monitoring wells have been installed in the northeast section of the U.S. Department of Energy's Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant, the first phase of a project to enhance groundwater treatment.

Data from the new wells will support the project's next phase, which includes installing an additional 13 monitoring wells, two extraction wells, and a new treatment facility to augment the existing pump-and-treat unit. The next phase begins when samples from the nine new monitoring wells are assessed.

The DOE reported a horseshoe-shaped area of contaminated groundwater plumes containing trichloroethene extends under the site. TCE was used to clean equipment when the gaseous diffusion plant operated. The chemical's use was discontinued in the early 1990s.

Two pump-and-treat operations reduced the size of the plumes' high-concentration portion. More than 3.6 billion gallons of water were treated and more than 4,200 gallons of contamination were removed from the groundwater.

"The optimization project is another positive step in containing and controlling the groundwater contamination at the Paducah site," said Dave Dollins, project manager with DOE's Portsmouth/Paducah Project Office.

Fluor Federal Services, as the DOE's prime contractor for the Paducah Deactivation Project, is setting up the new systems.